

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CHANGE OF COMMAND AT SUVLA

(Map 3 ; Sketch A)

10 Aug. ON the evening of the 10th August Sir Ian Hamilton wrote in his diary: "The Turks . . . knew they were done unless they " could quickly knock us off our Chunuk Bair. So they have " done it. Never mind: never say die."¹

This entry is typical of the man. At the moment it was made the whole edifice of his plan was in ruins. The Helles garrison had failed to prevent the Turkish Southern Group from sending reinforcements to Sari Bair; the Anzac corps had fought itself to a standstill; a large part of the IX Corps was exhausted. None of his original objectives had been gained, and on the three fronts of attack he had lost more than 25,000 men in four days.

But the Commander-in-Chief refused to accept defeat. He counted that the Turks were just as tired and disorganized as his own troops. He was certain that their casualties had been correspondingly severe; and with all the faith that was in him he held to the belief that final success would fall to the side with the greatest "will to conquer". He realized that the Anzac troops could not attack again for several days, and that even then they would have no chance of success without the help of a turning movement from Suvla. But he still had no doubt of the eventual success of such a turning movement.

The first essential, however, was the capture of the surrounding hills at Suvla before the Turks could put them in a state of defence. Sir Ian realized the necessity of allowing the IX Corps at least a day's breathing space for reorganization. But he was convinced that it would be courting disaster to remain in the open plain while the Turks fortified all the surrounding heights, and he was determined to capture the Tekke Tepe ridge at the earliest opportunity with the 54th Division. After that, with the help of the 2nd Mounted

¹ "Gallipoli Diary", ii. p. 89.

Division (now promised from Egypt), and with a part, at least, 10 Aug. of the 29th Division, he was fully confident that Stopford's corps would be able to co-operate actively with Birdwood's next offensive by launching a strong attack round the northern flank of Kojia Chemen Tepe.

A sanguine temperament, indomitable courage, and a determination to conquer are invaluable qualities in the character of a commander-in-chief. But there can be little doubt that Sir Ian Hamilton was underestimating the difficulties that now confronted him, and in particular the really serious condition of the IX Corps. At this moment a miasma of defeat was rising from the Suvla plain, and all ranks of the corps were rapidly becoming infected.

The 54th Division (Major-General F. S. Inglefield) began to reach Suvla on the afternoon of the 10th, and seven of its battalions had landed before nightfall. Wishing this division to be employed in an advance on Tekke Tepe, Sir Ian Hamilton was particularly anxious that its units should not be used piecemeal. The IX Corps was consequently informed that the division represented the last available reserve and was not to be thrown into action without the previous sanction of G.H.Q.

But at IX Corps headquarters that afternoon there was great anxiety for the safety of the Suvla beaches. There was known to be a gap in the line on the right of the 10th Division, and, without reference to G.H.Q., it was decided that this gap must be filled by units of the 54th Division. Some officers of the division were taken out to see the line to be occupied, and about 10 P.M. six of the newly arrived battalions, belonging to three different brigades, were hurried inland to occupy it. Soon after starting the guide lost his way. There was much marching and counter-marching, and the troops passed a restless night to no purpose. Thus, as in the case of the 53rd Division, the 54th was given no chance of settling down and finding its feet on arrival.

This was the situation when, early on the 11th, an order 11 Aug. reached General Stopford from G.H.Q. that the 54th Division was to seize the Tekke Tepe ridge at dawn next morning, following a night advance to the foothills.

In amplification of this order a staff officer arrived at Suvla with detailed instructions. The Tekke Tepe ridge was to be occupied from Kavak Tepe to a point above Anafarta Sagir, and to be held by a chain of mutually supporting posts. General Stopford was told that G.H.Q. fully realized that the three divisions already at Suvla would not be able to co-operate in a general attack next day, but that it was assumed that arrange-

11 Aug. ments could be made to protect both flanks of the 54th Division during its advance. Time, it was again pointed out, was of vital importance: further help would be reaching the Turks shortly; but air reports showed that the Tekke Tepe ridge was not yet held in strength and was certainly not entrenched.

Late that afternoon a long letter from General Stopford arrived at G.H.Q. In this letter, which made no mention of the orders he had received for attacking the Tekke Tepe ridge, the IX Corps commander threw all the blame for the previous day's failure on the lack of training of the 53rd Division.¹

Sir Ian Hamilton refused to accept this opinion, and at once hastened to Suvla to infuse the corps commander with some of his own resolution.

In point of fact, the problem that faced General Stopford at Suvla, now that the advantages of the initial surprise had evaporated, was undoubtedly very difficult. But his inactivity on the 7th and 8th August had destroyed Sir Ian Hamilton's confidence; and his explanation of the failure to advance on the 10th was so unconvincing that the Commander-in-Chief would appear to have underestimated the full extent of the difficulties which now confronted him. It happened, therefore, that this visit to Suvla did nothing to improve the general situation.

At this interview, General Stopford again insisted that both his Territorial divisions were "sucked oranges": their best units had been drafted away to France, and most of those which had taken their place were frankly unreliable. But the Commander-in-Chief was adamant. The attack on the Tekke Tepe ridge could be and must be made. Obviously, as another day had been wasted, and no preparations begun, the advance must be postponed for another 24 hours. But the 54th Division must assault the crest of the ridge at dawn on the 13th, and the 10th and 11th Divisions must render as much assistance as possible.

General Stopford now brought forward another objection. General Inglefield would have to advance over scrub-covered foothills which were believed to be full of snipers. So even if the 54th Division succeeded in gaining the crest of the ridge, a sufficient number of the enemy would certainly be left behind to harass its communications and stampede its mule convoys.

This objection, it must be noticed, was very far from frivolous. The thick scrub on the western side of the ridge was ideal ground for skirmishers, and till all the Turks in the neighbourhood had been rounded up or dispersed, the problem of

¹ See "Gallipoli Diary", ii. p. 90.

communications was bound to be full of difficulties. But the 11 Aug. Commander-in-Chief made light of this obstacle. He would procure a hundred trained marksmen and scouts from the Anzac corps to give a lead to the inexperienced Territorials in dealing with Turkish snipers.¹ Before he left Suvla that night it was definitely settled that the 54th Division should assault the ridge at dawn on the 13th.

But the morning of the 12th found General Stopford still 12 Aug. in difficulty. His whole front was still disorganized, and little progress had been made in the completion of a defensive line. Though the Turks had shown little activity on the 11th, there had been a good deal of sniping, and the British troops had passed a trying day. The re-sorting of units had given the men no chance of sleep, and the divisions were still so intermixed that the task of supplying them with rations and water had proved immensely difficult.

In these circumstances General Stopford was apprehensive of launching an attack which might develop into a major operation for which the bulk of his corps was unprepared. In particular he disliked the idea of a long march at night over un-reconnoitred country, the latter half of which was covered with thick scrub. If the assault on the ridge was really to be made next morning, he would have liked to order the 53rd Division to push forward to the foothills that afternoon, so as to give the 54th a shorter night march and a clear run to assault the crest at dawn. On the other hand he felt convinced that even if the ground between his present front line and the foothills were only defended by nests of snipers, none of General Lindley's brigades was capable of clearing them out.

These were the doubts assailing General Stopford when he opened a corps conference on the morning of the 12th to arrange the details of the attack. At the beginning of this conference, hearing that the corps commander wanted the 53rd Division to push its line forward to the foothills that afternoon but did not consider the troops fit for it, General Inglefield (54th Division) offered to carry out this task with one of his own brigades. This offer was accepted, and it was then arranged that Br.-General C. M. Brunker's 163rd Brigade should advance to a line on the eastern side of some shepherds' huts marked on the map about 2,000 yards east of Point 28. As soon as this line was reached a brigade of the 53rd, following in rear, was to consolidate it, and after nightfall the whole of

¹ Altogether 87 Australians and New Zealanders were sent along the beach from Anzac for attachment to the 54th Division; but most of them did not arrive before the 14th August.

12 Aug. the 54th Division was to pass through and assault the crest of the ridge at dawn. The 10th and 11th Divisions were to co-operate on either flank.

This was the plan arranged, but the corps commander subsequently decided that he must see what happened in the afternoon before agreeing to the main operation, and the only order issued was for the afternoon advance.

In forwarding a copy of his plan to G.H.Q., General Stopford explained that if the afternoon advance went off successfully he would proceed with the main operation next morning. If, however, General Inglefield's troops met with strong opposition and became disorganized, he suggested that it would be unwise to attempt a dawn attack without another 24 hours delay.

Sir Ian Hamilton judged from the tenor of this message that the chance of reaching the crest of the Tekke Tepe ridge next morning was already very remote. He would not agree, however, to the immediate abandonment of all idea of any offensive action. Not only was he averse to leaving the initiative entirely in Turkish hands. He had telegraphed earlier in the day to Lord Kitchener (who was chafing at the slow rate of progress) that everyone was "fully alive to the necessity for 'dash', and that a fresh attack would be launched the following day. Being anxious to avoid cancelling that telegram, he decided that if an advance on Tekke Tepe should prove too difficult, he would substitute for it an attack on the W Hills; and General Braithwaite was thereupon sent over to Suvla to discuss the matter with Stopford. Braithwaite was authorized to agree, if necessary, to the cancellation of the Tekke Tepe attack; and in that event he was to suggest the alternative operation.

After hearing General Stopford's arguments, Braithwaite was persuaded that, whatever the success of the afternoon's operation, the attack on Tekke Tepe should not take place, and the divisional commanders were so informed at 4.15 P.M. Braithwaite further agreed that an attack on the W Hills next morning would also be impracticable. But it was arranged that this latter operation should be launched "at an early opportunity", and should be supported on its southern flank by at least one brigade of General Birdwood's corps.

General Braithwaite then returned to G.H.Q. On a rival he was able to tell Sir Ian Hamilton that just before leaving Suvla he had heard that the afternoon advance of the 163rd Brigade had started well; also that two platoons of the 6/Royal Munster Fusiliers had captured a small Turkish post close to the British front line on Kiretch Tepe.

That night Sir Ian Hamilton again cabled to Lord Kitchener: 12 Aug.

After anxiously weighing the pros and cons I have decided that it is wiser to wait another 24 hours before carrying out the general attack mentioned this morning. Braithwaite has just returned from the IX Corps and he found that the spirit and general organization were improving rapidly. A small attack by a brigade, which promised well, was in progress. This morning the 10th Division captured a trench.

Meanwhile—although the true facts of the case were not yet known, even by the brigadier concerned—the advance by the 163rd Brigade had ended in calamity.

No previous effort had been made to reconnoitre the ground over which this advance was to be made. The enemy's strength and dispositions were entirely unknown, but it was firmly believed that the Suvla plain was only lightly held. This was more or less true. Turkish information now shows that the front of attack was defended by two companies of the 36th Regiment. There were two more companies in support, and one in reserve on the crest of Kavak Tepe. The Turks on Kidney Hill, however, could enfilade a daylight advance in the Suvla plain, and so could the Turkish posts on the foothills east of Sulajik.

The advance of the 163rd Brigade was timed to start at 4 P.M. and was to be supported by the naval guns, an 18-pdr. battery, and two batteries of mountain guns. The artillery opened fire punctually. But the liaison between guns and infantry was very defective; the gunners had no definite targets, and they were not even sure of the position of the British front line.

The infantry were late in starting, and it was not until 4.45 P.M. that the line began to move forward with the 1/5th Norfolk (Lieut.-Colonel Sir Horace Beauchamp) on the right, the 1/8th Hampshire (Isle of Wight Rifles) (Lieut.-Colonel J. E. Rhodes) in the centre, and the 1/5th Suffolk (Lieut.-Colonel W. M. Armes) on the left. Behind the left flank followed the 1/4th Norfolk, commanded by its adjutant.

Orders were vague, and, as commanding officers had never seen the ground, there was great doubt as to the exact whereabouts of their objective. Subordinate leaders for the most part had only a hazy idea of what was required of them; and, although a number of maps were hurriedly issued at the last minute, most of them depicted another part of the peninsula.

Near the final objective the ground was covered with thick prickly scrub; but the first part of the advance lay through

12 Aug. open grazing land, cut up by dry water-courses, and dotted with low trees. Here and there were patches of cultivation, surrounded by ditches and occasionally by a straggling hedge. Through this country the line advanced unchecked for several hundred yards. But after half a mile had been traversed casualties began to occur, and it soon became apparent that a great mistake had been made in attempting to cross this open plain by daylight. Immediately to the front the opposition was not heavy;¹ but a hot fire was coming from the high ground on the left near Kidney Hill and also from the right flank.

A thousand yards from the starting line casualties became so heavy that units lost all cohesion; the pace began to flag; and the advance died away. On the right a portion of the 1/5th Norfolk continued to press forward; but this party, consisting of 15 officers and 250 men, was not supported, and was never seen again. In other parts of the line the troops were soon falling back to their starting-point. The ground gained was lost; and out of the whole brigade at nightfall only about 800 men could be collected to occupy the line of a sunken cart-track to the north of, but out of touch with, the open left flank of the 53rd Division.

The casualties in this unfortunate affair were heavy. The Isle of Wight Rifles lost 8 officers and 300 other ranks, and the 1/5th Norfolk 22 officers and 350 others.

On the rest of the corps front the day of the 12th August had passed quietly. The Turks, who had themselves suffered heavily since the morning of the 9th,² were well content to be given time to dig, and apart from a good deal of sniping the reorganization of the 10th, 53rd and 11th Divisions proceeded uninterruptedly. Water was now being found in adequate quantities throughout the forward areas—in the Suvla plain it existed a few feet below the surface wherever one cared to dig³—and the mule transport could at last be used exclusively for

¹ Surviving officers of the Isle of Wight Rifles insist that there was little or no firing from their front—the Turks had apparently retreated, and all casualties were caused by long-range enfilade fire.

² The Turkish official account places the losses of the 7th and 12th Divisions between 9th-13th August at 3,536.

³ In his evidence before the Dardanelles Commission, General de Lisle, who reached Suvla on 15th August, stated: "There were wells within $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of the shore which I had opened out. On the Kiretch Tepe ridge "there were two wells 400 feet above the sea. . . . Between Kiretch Tepe "and the Salt Lake there were as many wells as you liked to dig. You "had not got to go down more than 15 feet before you got as much water "as you wanted. On the shore, within 100 yards of high-water mark you "had only to dig the sand 4 feet down to get water. . . . The difficulties "about water were very much exaggerated." Similar conditions were found by the writer in a recent visit to Suvla in the month of August.

stores, rations and ammunition. By nightfall General Mahon ^{12 Aug.} had at last got back all his five battalions from Hammersley's right flank. More guns had been brought along the coastal track from Anzac,¹ and the Sherwood Foresters on the extreme right had established touch with the Anzac left flank.

During the night of the 12th/13th, while still in ignorance of the failure of the afternoon advance, Sir Ian Hamilton continued his plans for the next attack at Suvla. This operation was to consist of the capture of the W Hills and the Anafarta spur, and was to be undertaken by the 11th and 54th Divisions. General Birdwood was to co-operate on his left flank with one brigade, and the Commander-in-Chief had now decided that the attack should not be launched until this co-operation could be arranged.

About 8.45 A.M. on the 13th General Stopford telegraphed ^{13 Aug.} to G.H.Q. that the opposition encountered by the 163rd Brigade the previous afternoon had been heavier than expected. The troops "had done well against strong opposition in difficult country", but it would take time to withdraw them from the new line, and he doubted if the 54th Division could be ready to attack the Anafarta spur till the morning of the 15th.

Scarcely, however, had this telegram been despatched, when an ominous message reached Stopford from the 53rd Division. The divisional commander reported that the Turks were shelling his line intermittently and that one of his brigades was "so exhausted that it was finding it very hard to hold on". The 11th Division reported at the same time that a brigade of the 53rd seemed "very shaky". Thereupon Stopford telegraphed to G.H.Q. that a serious situation had now arisen in his centre, as the 53rd Division was reported to be exhausted and incapable of any defence. The Turks, he added, were "inclined to be aggressive", and, "in the event of the worst happening", he had only the 54th Division to replace the 53rd, "which are only a danger and may bolt at any minute".²

On receipt of this telegram the Commander-in-Chief again set off for Suvla to see the situation for himself.

¹ The LIX Bde. R.F.A. had completed its disembarkation during 9th August. A Battery LVIII Bde. arrived soon after daybreak on the 12th and went into position on the north side of the bay near the Charak Chesme spring. (The other batteries followed on succeeding nights, the brigade being complete on the 15th Aug.) The 15th Heavy Battery (60-pdrs.) landed at Suvla on the 12th August, and had two guns in action at Charak Chesme, and two at Hill 10.

² The alarmist tone of these messages was unwarranted. The Turks did not attack; the 53rd Division did not vacate its line; and General Lindley subsequently reported that he had made a personal tour of his front and found his men in much better shape.

13 Aug. A momentous interview took place that afternoon at Suvla. General Stopford again asked for more time to rest and reorganize his troops. He insisted that the 53rd Division was finished and the 54th incapable of attack. Time was needed before any attack could be launched with the least chance of success. To this belief, which was plainly shared by his subordinates, he clung with determination.

Three courses were now open to Sir Ian Hamilton: to agree to further delay; to insist on an attack by commanders who professed no faith in their troops and were already convinced of failure; or to appoint new commanders. Deferring his choice between these grim alternatives, he left the conference with nothing decided, and returned to G.H.Q.

Sir Ian Hamilton was right in thinking that the criticisms levelled against the Territorial troops at Suvla were unduly severe. In most of the units concerned the officers and men were capable of fighting well if properly handled. They were merely losing heart from ignorance of the situation and lack of intelligent orders. Nevertheless, a further consideration of the Suvla problem persuaded the Commander-in-Chief to bow to a new delay, and at midnight on the 13th/14th August his Chief of Staff telegraphed to General Stopford:

After hearing you this afternoon Chief has decided that he will not call upon corps to make general attack at present. Therefore you must with utmost energy reorganize your units and consolidate your present line. Take every opportunity to make as forward a line as possible and make that line impregnable. Chief relies on you to expedite by every means in your power the process of reorganization and the thorough preparation of trenches, communications, etc.

ACTION OF KIRETCH TEPE RIDGE, 15TH-16TH AUGUST

14 Aug. General Stopford's reaction to this order to consolidate as forward a line as possible was somewhat unexpected. On the 14th August, without further reference or report to G.H.Q., he at last decided to call upon General Mahon to push forward along the Kiretch Tepe ridge, to capture the Turkish strong-point on the summit of the ridge which had so long held up his advance, and to occupy Kidney Hill. Orders to this effect **15 Aug.** were issued at 8.40 A.M. on the 15th; but the lapse of another day had necessarily increased the difficulties of General Mahon's task.

On the morning of the 15th General Mahon was still holding his original line astride the ridge at Jephson's Post. The 30th



JEPHSON'S POST, LOOKING ALONG THE KIRETCH TEPE RIDGE
TOWARDS EJELMER BAY

Brigade (Br.-General Nicol) was on the northern slopes of the ridge, and the 31st Brigade (Br.-General Hill) on its southern slopes. To support the advance the 162nd Brigade (Br.-General C. de Winton), then in bivouac near A Beach, was also placed at Mahon's disposal.

Having decided that his own brigades should advance from their existing positions, and that the 162nd should approach Kidney Hill from the south, General Mahon delegated Br.-General Hill to take command of the attack; but orders to the 162nd Brigade were issued direct from divisional headquarters.

The infantry advance was to begin at 1 P.M., but General Hill received his orders so late that there was little time for his subordinate leaders to learn what was required before they moved forward.

According to Hill's orders the 5/R. Inniskilling Fusiliers, holding the left of the 31st Brigade front, was to push forward to a small knoll on the southern slope of the ridge about 400 yards short of Kidney Hill. The 7/R. Munster Fusiliers was to clear the northern slopes of the ridge. Supporting troops were then to capture the strong-point on the summit of the ridge, and to push forward to Kidney Hill whilst the 162nd Brigade came in on the right flank.

The advance¹ was not expected to be strongly opposed, for it was believed that the *Gallipoli Gendarmerie* on the ridge had not been substantially reinforced. In point of fact, however, a task which might have been accomplished with little trouble between the 7th and 12th August was now far more difficult. Though the three companies of *Gendarmerie*, which had held up the advance of the 11/Manchester on the night of the 6th/7th August, were still in front line, the 2/127th Regiment from the Asiatic side of the Straits was moving up in support, and Kidney Hill was held by a battalion of the 19th Regiment from Bulair.²

On the northern slopes of the Kiretch Tepe ridge the advance began hopefully. The Turkish garrison had been demoralized by some accurate shooting by the destroyers on the

¹ It was supported by the fire of two destroyers on the left flank, a brigade of 18-pdrs., two 60-pdrs., and four mountain guns.

² Further reinforcements seem to have arrived in the neighbourhood or to have been on the way:

3/127th Regiment . . .	At Ejelmer Bay.
3/127th " . . .	Coming into line S. of Kidney Hill.
2/19th " . . .	Behind the 3/127th.
1/19th " . . .	Collecting near Turshun Keui.
1/39th " . . .	

All these troops, with those already on Kiretch Tepe, and three batteries of artillery, were being constituted into a new 5th Division under Major Wilmer, whose headquarters were at Turshun Keui.

15 Aug. left flank, and the 7/Munsters met with little opposition. But the troops were still being guided by the unfortunate instructions originally issued from corps headquarters—that every effort was to be made to gain ground without incurring casualties. The advance was cautious, and progress very slow.

About 6 P.M., hearing that little headway had been made, Br.-General Nicol called for a more vigorous effort, and the Munsters scrambled forward with fixed bayonets to close with the enemy. This show of determination at once met with success, and the Turks broke and fled. The 7/Munsters pushed on for about 400 yards, while the 6/Munsters, supported by two companies of the 6/R. Dublin Fusiliers, which had come up on the right, now advanced to the highest point of the ridge, where they captured the Turkish strong-point and a few prisoners.

Nicol's battalions had achieved a definite success. But unfortunately the advance on the inland slope of the hill had not been so successful. The 5/R. Inniskilling Fusiliers, starting at 1.15 P.M., had at first made good progress. But its advance was not supported. It came under very heavy fire, and was eventually held up all along its line. At nightfall, hearing that its commanding officer (Lient.-Colonel A. S. Vanrenen) had been killed and most of the officers wounded, the brigadier ordered the battalion to retire. Owing to the number of wounded that had to be collected,¹ the withdrawal took many hours, but was completed without interference by the enemy.

As for the 162nd brigade Br.-General de Winton's three battalions² reached the right flank of the 10th Division at 1 P.M., and prepared to advance with the Bedfordshire leading. It was understood that the brigade was to act as a flank guard to the 10th Division, and little fighting was anticipated. There had been no time to reconnoitre the very difficult ground over which battalions were to move, and General de Winton had no information about the probable whereabouts of the enemy.

After advancing some 400 yards the Bedfordshire came under increasing rifle and machine-gun fire. It was not easy for inexperienced troops to wheel left-handed and continue their advance astride the numerous gullies which run down from the ridge. The very enthusiasm of the battalion—for all ranks were eager to get on—led to loss of cohesion. Progress became very slow, and parties of the 1/10th and 1/11th London were dribbled forward to reinforce the line.

¹ The casualties in this battalion were reported as 20 officers and 336 other ranks.

² 1/5th Bedfordshire, 1/10th London and 1/11th London. The 1/4th Northamptonshire did not land till noon on the 15th.

Br.-General Hill, hearing that the advance of the Inniskillings was not being supported, was soon sending out messages to urge the attack forward, and late in the afternoon Br.-General de Winton went up with his brigade-major (Major Stuart Hay) to lead the troops in person. He was gravely wounded while doing so, but his example was not without effect. Though the Territorials had already suffered crippling losses, a last effort by small parties of all three battalions advanced on the left of the line to the south-western shoulder of Kidney Hill. Here the troops held on for many hours, entirely unsupported, but during the night the whole brigade fell back to a line prolonging the original front line of the 31st Brigade.¹

By daylight on the 16th, therefore, though the 30th Brigade was still holding its gains on the crest of the ridge, and on the northern slope, there was an awkward re-entrant on the southern slope, and the right flank of the troops holding the Turkish strong-point was entirely unprotected. All the battalions concerned were very tired and in no condition for further offensive action. For the moment the situation in front was quiet; but there was every reason to anticipate a Turkish counter-attack.

These fears were justified. Soon after 4 A.M. a series of fierce bombing attacks was launched against the new line of General Nicol's brigade. The Irish troops resisted gallantly, although the few bombs they had were far inferior to the Turkish missile. Rocks and stones, in default of anything more deadly, were hurled at the enemy, and bayonet charges helped to keep him at bay. But casualties were heavy, and soon after 9 A.M. an urgent appeal was made for reinforcements. At division and corps headquarters, however, it was an inopportune moment for making quick decisions. The previous evening, in circumstances which will be described at the end of this chapter, General Stopford had been removed from the command of the IX Corps; and, pending the arrival of his successor, General de Lisle had arrived from Suvla to assume the temporary command. General Mahon had resigned the command of the 10th Division; and, when the request for reinforcements arrived, both he and Stopford had already left the peninsula, and the new corps commander had no knowledge of the local situation. In these circumstances, the first reply to Nicol's appeal was that no help could be sent him.

Meanwhile the Turks were still attacking; but the Irish-

¹ Major G. F. M. Davis, 1/11th London, was killed while covering the retreat of the rear party. In the three battalions of the 162nd Brigade engaged the total casualties in this attack amounted to 37 officers and 900 men.

16 Aug. men continued to hold out gamely. At nightfall, however, Br.-General Nicol became increasingly anxious for the safety of his new line. It was plain that the Turks had been strongly reinforced, and the losses of the Irish troops had been very heavy indeed. He consulted the battalion commanders, who were of opinion that the new front could not be held much longer without fresh troops and a good supply of bombs. At about 7 P.M., therefore, with Hill's full approval, he ordered a withdrawal to his old front line. This began at once; and was completed before dawn. The Turks followed up cautiously, and soon after daylight next morning their old positions were again held in strength.

So ended an operation in which the equivalent of three brigades had been involved to little purpose. Without exception the troops had fought splendidly, and it was not their fault that nothing had been achieved. The total British casualties amounted to nearly 2,000 killed, wounded and missing.¹ There can be little real doubt that by the 15th August the chance of success at Suvla without great numerical superiority and strong artillery support had already disappeared.

It is interesting to notice, however, that according to Turkish accounts the news of unwonted British activity on Kiretci Tepe, even on the 15th August, caused very keen anxiety. It now appears, indeed, that, of all the courses open to Sir Ian Hamilton after landing at Suvla, a general attack to turn the Turkish right on the Kiretch Tepe ridge was the one most feared by Liman von Sanders. At Ak Bashi Bay, a few miles north of Kilia, was the main ammunition depot for the whole Turkish army in Gallipoli. Liman believed that if the British succeeded in reaching Ejelmer Bay and forcing back the Turkish right past Turshun Keui, the way would be open for an advance on Ak Bashi, and that this would mean defeat for the Turkish cause. In his memoirs he refers to the 15th August as a day of crisis.

How little reason there was for this alarm the reader already knows. Not only was the IX Corps incapable of a general attack on that day, but the idea of marching on Ak Bashi Bay had never been entertained by the British Commander-in-Chief, and it was not even known at British G.H.Q. that an attack was being made by the IX Corps on the 15th August.

Turkish accounts, on the other hand, would seem to show that prior to the 15th the British chances of being able to turn the Turkish right flank were unbelievably favourable. Even on

¹ The Turkish official account reveals the loss of 1,696 Turkish officers and men during the two days' fighting.

the 15th the Turkish units on the Kiretch Tepe ridge had no telephone equipment, and when, in the course of the afternoon, they appealed for reinforcements, their message had to go by hand to Major Willmer's headquarters, four miles distant. Troops were at once sent up from Turshuh Keui, but the British destroyers, who were shelling the ridge, brought their advance to a stop, and while daylight lasted the units already in action received no help at all.

THE SUPERSESSION OF GENERAL STOPFORD

It was on the night of the 13th/14th August that Sir Ian Hamilton had felt himself forced to agree—against his every inclination—to a further delay at Suvla.

Up to that date he had never once suggested in his daily cables to Lord Kitchener that there was any real fear of the ultimate failure of his main August offensive. He had admitted his keen disappointment at the slow rate of progress at Suvla, and had pointed out that the chief cause of delay was the age of the generals. But though it was within his right, if he considered such a step necessary, to appoint new commanders, he had merely hinted at his dissatisfaction with some of his subordinate generals, and had left it to Lord Kitchener to order their supersession. On the 9th August he had cabled home:

I can find no sufficient reason why we were not in possession of the country from Ejelmer Bay to Biyuk Anafarta early yesterday morning except that just as no man putteth new wine into old bottles so the combination between new troops and old generals seems to be proving unsuitable except in the case of the 13th Division.

In a later message he had again indirectly criticized General Stopford's capabilities by remarking that one of the reasons why the 13th Division at Anzac was shaping better than the 10th or the 11th was because the corps commander at Anzac was such a "fount of energy" to those under him.

But early on the 14th August he cabled more frankly—though still not frankly enough—of the serious situation that confronted him:

The result of my visit to the IX Corps, from which I have just returned, has bitterly disappointed me. There is nothing for it but to allow time to rest and reorganize unless I force Stopford and his divisional generals to undertake a general action for which, in their present frame of mind, they have no heart. In fact, they are not fit for it. I am exceedingly reluctantly obliged to give them time to rest and reorganize their troops.

We could never hope to reproduce such favourable conditions—though we were to repeat our landing operations a hundred times—as to land one division under cover of dark, and, as the day broke, have the next division sailing in to its support. These favourable conditions were not taken advantage of for reasons which I can only explain by letter; the swift advance was not delivered, and therefore the mischief is done. Until we are ready to advance again, reorganized and complete, we must go slow.

In this message, it will be seen, Sir Ian Hamilton definitely threw the blame on the Suvla generals, not only for the calamitous delays on the 7th and 8th August, but for their subsequent reluctance to undertake a general action. He ignored as invalid the reasons which General Stopford himself had given for delay—that his troops were at the moment unfit for offensive action—and roundly asserted that it was the generals who were not fit for it. This assertion was doubtless prompted by an account which one of his own staff officers had just given Sir Ian Hamilton of his visit that day to the front line at Suvla. In a report which he subsequently repeated in his evidence before the Dardanelles Commission, this officer had written:

I found the 53rd Division in a line of lightly dug trenches, with men standing about on the parapet and even cooking in front of the trenches. No work was going on, and there was a general air of inaction. I was astonished to find that this was the front line. There were no Turkish trenches or Turks in sight, and only some occasional desultory shelling and sniping. While I was there it was discovered that some troops in trenches in bushes on our left front, which for some days had been thought to be Turks, were in reality British. Every visit to Suvla discloses confusion, inertia, and magnification of difficulties, due to the pessimistic attitude of higher commanders and staffs, which filters down to the troops.

Lord Kitchener's reply, received on the 15th August, gave Sir Ian Hamilton the lead he had been wanting so long:

If you deem it necessary to replace Stopford,¹ Mahon,² and Hammersley, have you any competent generals to take their places? From your report I think Stopford should come home. This is a young man's war, and we must have commanding officers who will take full advantage of opportunities which occur but seldom. If, therefore, any generals fail, do not hesitate to act promptly. . . . Any generals I have available I will send you.

¹ Evidence of Major the Hon. A. Hore-Ruthven, V.C.

² This reference to General Mahon was due to a misunderstanding. Sir Ian had no wish to part with General Mahon, though his reference to the slowness of the 10th Division had given that impression. He put matters right by replying that, as a divisional commander, Mahon had done "better than the others", and that he wanted to retain his services.

Close upon the heels of this telegram, the War Secretary again telegraphed that he had asked Sir John French in France to supply a corps commander and two divisional commanders. "I hope", he added, "that Stopford has been relieved by you "already"

As a result of these messages Lieut.-General Hon. Julian Byng was sent from France to command the IX Corps. Pending his arrival Sir Ian Hamilton sent for General de Lisle from Helles on the 15th August to relieve General Stopford; and Stopford left Suvla the following day. General Mahon, a senior lieutenant-general, was asked to waive his seniority and continue in command of the 10th Division under the orders of Major-General de Lisle, "at any rate during the present "phase of the operations", but he declined to do so, and asked to be relieved of his command. Br.-General Hill was consequently given the temporary command of the 10th Division on the morning of the 16th, and Major-General W. R. Marshall assumed command of the 29th Division *vice* de Lisle. No immediate steps were taken to relieve General Hammersley, but on the 23rd August, under orders from the War Office, he was replaced in command of the 11th Division by Major-General E. A. Fanshawe.

Nor were these the only changes in the command of troops at Suvla. On the 17th August Major-General Lindley voluntarily resigned command of the 53rd Division, on the grounds that he felt himself incapable of pulling it together; and he was temporarily replaced by Major-General Hon. H. A. Lawrence. The following day, as the result of an adverse report by General Hammersley, Br.-General Sitwell was succeeded by Colonel C. C. Hannay in the command of the 34th Brigade.

These changes, however, were too late. By the 16th August the battle was already lost. We have already seen, indeed, that the Suvla operations as originally planned, depended for their success on surprise. Once the surprise had gone, the chance of the original plan succeeding was extremely small; and it may even be, though Sir Ian Hamilton's buoyant spirit would not admit it without determined trial, that as early as the 10th August further progress was impossible till the IX Corps was reorganized, reinforced, and equipped with more artillery. To admit this is to admit that subsequently to the 9th August Sir Frederick Stopford's hesitation was justified.

The delays on the 7th and 8th August had been the root cause of failure, and even here it must be remembered in General Stopford's favour that he had been appointed by Lord

Kitchener to a position which no man of spirit could refuse, but which was far beyond his powers. He had, moreover, been hampered by an inexperienced staff and half-trained troops. For the loss of those golden opportunities of the first two days ashore a portion of the responsibility should rest on the mistaken policy which had retained in France all the leaders who had already been tried and proved in war. It was owing to this policy that a vitally important enterprise, the success of which depended upon energy and dash, had been entrusted to an officer of advanced years, in indifferent health, who had no previous experience of high command in the field.

TRUTHFUL COMMENT ON THE ANZAC-SUVLA OFFENSIVE

The following comment on the Anzac-Suvla offensive, which appears in the Turkish official account, cannot fail to be of interest to the British student of the operations:

The British plan for the Suvla landing, and the operations leading up to it, were well suited to the requirements of the situation. It was sound to base this plan on a preliminary attack on the units in the Kanli Sirt (Leone Pine) sector with a view to engaging and pinning down the defence and forcing it to expend its reserves. This operation was calculated not only to facilitate the landing at Suvla, but also to cover the turning movement round the right flank of the Turkish force opposite Anzac.

Had this sound plan been executed with resolution and energy it would have effected very far-reaching results. From the Suvla sector, which was for the most part undefended, and only watched by a very weak detachment, it would have been possible to capture Anafarta Sagir and Boghali. This objective once attained, the mastery of the Straits would have been definitely won, and the land communication of the greater part of the Fifth Army would have been cut.

The reasons why the attack failed may be summarized thus:

- (i.) The offensive was not synchronized or co-ordinated.
- (ii.) The force which landed at Suvla did not attack vigorously and swiftly the weak force opposed to it.

The four alternative courses which the British might have adopted in August—an advance on the Asiatic shore, a new attack at Helles, a landing between Helles and Anzac, or a landing at Bulair—held no such promise as a landing at Suvla Bay. If a force had landed on the Asiatic shore, even without opposition, it could only have reached the level of Eren Keui on the day after the landing. The resistance of Turkish advanced troops on the line of the Scamander would probably have doubled this period. With one reserve division at Chanak and another brought across from Kilid Bahr the Turkish

command should have been able, either at Eren Keui or some suitable position in rear, to hold up and immobilize the advance of any enemy force landed on the Asiatic shore.

Had the British merely employed their fresh troops to reinforce Helles or Anzac there was very little chance of obtaining any important result.

A landing on the coast between Helles and Anzac would have been doomed to failure. This sector had been strongly entrenched. The Turkish reserve divisions of the north and south groups were close at hand, and would have crushed the invaders at the very moment of landing.

A landing at Bulair would have been held up at once and without difficulty by the Army reserve. Besides, owing to its distance from the vital points of the Straits, this sector was of minor importance.